

Athenian News :

O R,

Dunton's Oracle.

From Saturday April the 1st, to Tuesday April the 4th, 1710.

HAVING given my Readers a short Taſt of—*Dunton's Poſt, or dying Farewel to this Life and World, Of—The Mob-Poſt, or ſecret Hiſtory of Sachevereliſm, Of—The Whipping-Poſt, or a War with Vice and Error, Of—The Lying-Poſt, or Fictions prov'd Realities by Way of Paradox, Of—The Sibyl-Poſt, or Ideal Kingdom—*I ſhou'd here inſert—*The Love-Poſt, or News for the Ladies—*(it being one of the Three Thouſand Poſts that is to compleat *Dunton's Oracle*) but having this Week receiv'd great Variety of nice and curious Queſtions, written by Gentlemen that are very importunate for a ſpeedy Anſwer, I muſt beg the Ladies Pardon that I once more turn my whole Paper into

A Caſuiſtical-Poſt, or Athenian Mercury.

Queſt. *Whether am I oblig'd to forgive Offences to my Brother, unleſs he profeſs ſincere Repentance? Being afraid you ſhou'd determine for the Affirmative, I wou'd aſk Leave to ſuggeſt, that God himſelf forgives no impenitent Sinners, and ſhan't his Practice become a Standard high enough for us? Shall we pretend to out-do him, and to be more forgiving than he? Farther, I find in St. Luke's Goſpel, Ch. 17. 34. that our Saviour laying down the Meaſures of Forgiveneſs, has left theſe Directions, If thy Brother treſpaſs againſt thee, rebuke him, and if he repent forgive him. And if he treſpaſs againſt thee ſeven Times in a Day, and ſeven Times in a Day turn again to thee ſaying I repent, thou ſhalt forgive him. Don't all this ſufficiently evidence that Repentance is the Conditio ſine qua non of Pardon?*

Anſw. My Queriſt ſeems to ſuſpect the Goodneſs of his Argument, that Repentance and the Profeſſion of it in a Brother is the neceſſary Condition, without which he's not oblig'd to forgive him. I anſwer directly that one Brother is oblig'd to forgive another, without inſiſting upon his Repentance as the abſolutely neceſſary Condition of it. The Profeſſion of ſincere Repentance is extreamly deſirable, when it may be obtain'd by all the obliging and proper Methods we can uſe; but if it can't be obtain'd, there ſhou'd no Deſire of Revenge remain in the offend-ed Party, and when there is no Deſire of Revenge, there is Forgiveneſs, Pardon being the Diſſolution of the Obligation to Punishment. 'Tis true, that God himſelf forgives no Impenitent, but the Reason of the Caſe won't hold, from what God does, to what we are oblig'd to do. God has unſpeakably more Right to

the Sinner's Repentance, than we can have to the Repentance of an offending Brother. Beſides, we are not able infallibly to determine whether the Repentance of a Brother is ſincere, and ſhall there be ſo great a Charm in pronouncing a few Words, tho' never ſo hypocritical, upon which an Obligation to forgive ſhall follow, which upon other Terms wou'd not have done ſo? As to the Quotation from St. Luke, I find where the ſame Inſtitutions about the ſame Duty are laid in St. Matthew 18. 21, 22. the Condition is not inſiſted upon. In ſhort, the Forgiveneſs of a Brother is made the expreſs Condition of our own Pardon at the Hands of God, and therefore an unforgiving Diſpoſition is inconfiſtent with our own Pardon, but where our Forgiveneſs is ſincere, if there be no other Bar in the Way, our own Pardon will follow.

Q. Mr. Dunton, In a rakish Poem ſent to the Britiſh Apollo, I find theſe Words.—

And you ſhall be my God, &c.

I deſire your Thoughts of 'em, whether they are tolerable in a Chriſtian Nation? — R. F.

A. If Blaſphemy be intolerable, the Paſſage which you mention is unqueſtionably ſo. If all the Queriſts in the World ſhou'd ſend me Blaſphemy, I ſhou'd think my ſelf inexcusable in publiſhing it. It will by no Means excuſe, that 'tis ſent to 'em, as 'tis pretended, in Regard they are answerable for their whole Paper, and they don't ſo much as once reprove the Wickedneſs, which is the ſame Thing as to contribute Encouragement. The Hell, indeed, they threaten is no more than a being I know not what, nor where, a Punishment which, 'tis not probable, will lay any effectual Reſtraints upon the Vices of the Age, and which may, with equal Truth, be affirm'd of the future State of Bleſſedneſs. I can't but obſerve the Paſſage, which you quote, ſeems deſign'd to ridicule the very Language of the Covenant of Grace, when the conſenting Penitent reſigns himſelf up to God as his Owner, Governour, and laſt End. I hop'd, I never ſhou'd have met with an Inſtance of ſo flaming Infidelity and Ungodlineſs in a Chriſtian Kingdom, as to hear Divinity aſcrib'd to Apollo, and Perſonal Dedication to him under that Character. The Step is a pretty large one, towards introducing the Creed of the Heathens.

Q. Mr. Dunton, I ſhou'd be extreamly oblig'd, if you'd return me your free Thoughts, whether the Revolution was brought about upon the Foot of Reſiſtance, and whether Reſiſtance in ſome extraordinary Caſes, or an abſolute Non-reſiſtance,

resistance, be more agreeable to the antient Constitution of England?

A. The Revolution was brought about upon the Principle of Resistance, yet the P. of O. did not put up his Claim to the Crown upon that Foot, but chose rather to leave the Matter to the Determination and Choice of the Peers and People of England assembled with all imaginable Freedom to bring that Matter to an Issue. As to the Equity of the Revolution upon this Principle, I can't express my self better than in the very Words I met with in the Bp. of Sarum's Pastoral Letter, printed 1699. p. 19, &c. *There are few of those, tho' some seem now to be in Doubt concerning this Matter, (speaking of those who scrupled the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy to K. William and Q. Mary) who did not think that the King, when he was Prince of Orange, had a just Cause of War, when he first undertook this Business; for even at common Law an Heir in Remainder has just Cause to sue him that is in Possession, if he makes Waists on the Inheritance, which is his in Reversion. It is much more reasonable, since the Thing is much more important, that the Heir of a Crown shou'd interpose, when he sees him who is in Possession hurry'd on blindfold to subject an independent Kingdom to a foreign Jurisdiction, and thereby to rob it both of its Glory and of its Security: When it was manifest that this must occasion the greatest Ruin and Miseries possible to that Kingdom: And when a pretended Heir was set up in such a Manner that the whole Kingdom believ'd him spurious. In such a Case, it cannot be deny'd, even according to the highest Principles of Passive Obedience, that another Sovereign Prince might make War on a King so abusing his Power, and that this was the Case in Fact, will not be call'd in Question by any Protestant. So that here was a War begun upon just and lawful Grounds, and a War being so begun, it is the uncontroverted Opinion of all Lawyers, that the Success of a just War gives a lawful Title to that which is acquir'd in the Progress of it. That excellent Letter concludes from the Premises, that if the Prince of Orange had claim'd the Crown by Right of Conquest, all Lawyers must have been on his Side. We were effectually abandon'd, and the Government thrown up by K. James, and the great Seal cast into the Thames. In short, a just Force having brought us happily into the Hands of one, who might have rightfully claim'd the Crown, it was the most prudent and the most free Choice of the Peers and Commons, that put it upon the Head of our great Deliverer. It was a Piece of the most unparallel'd Ingratitude, to see those who were sensible of the extream Danger we were in, and glad of the Attempt that was made, begin to scruple the Oaths immediately afterwards. As to that Part of the Question which relates to the antient Constitution of England, I refer the Querist to that Passage of the Magna Charta granted by K. John, where it was expressly agreed, that in Case the King shou'd violate any Part of it, and shou'd refuse to rectify what he had done amiss, it shou'd be lawful for the Barons, and the whole People of England, to distress him by all the Ways they cou'd think on; such as the seizing on his Castles, Lands, and Possessions, Provision being only made for the Safety of the Persons of the King and Queen, and of their Children. This Magna Charta has ever since been esteem'd the Standard of our Government*

Q. Whether the Saints in Heaven will obtain the Knowledge of the Affairs of this World since the Creation of it?

A. No Doubt the Blessed will obtain the Knowledge of this World, since the Creation of it. The holy An-

gels will certainly give them a large Account of the World, before the Flood; how, and by what Gradations they corrupted themselves, departed from God, and abandon'd themselves to Sensuality and Profaness. What Moses hath very briefly reported, they will discourse more at Large, and give to the Blessed as full, clear, and satisfactory Knowledge of them. Many Things that are dark and obscure to us, will be set in open Light, by their more large and ample Discourse: That which now ministers Matter for many, and almost insuperable Objections, will be totally freed from them, by their larger Commentaries and Explications concerning them.

The holy Men of that Age, may also contribute something towards the Encrease of the Knowledge of the Blessed. Adam, and Abel, and Seth, and Enoch, and Noah, knew very much of the Affairs of the World, from the Creation to the Deluge; and since their Removal to Heaven, there is no Question, but that they have very much improv'd it: And surely, they will communicate their Knowledge, and entertain the new-come Saints with the Reports and Narratives of it.

The holy Angels also will acquaint them with the History of the World, after the Flood, 'till the Days of Abraham; they will give them Account of the re-peopling of it by the Posterity of Noah, of the Tower of Babel that they began to build, of the Confusion of their Language, and of their Dispersion into several Parts of the World thereupon: Of these Things, I make no Question, they will give very large and particular Accounts: Of those Things, of which we now know almost nothing, then and there (I mean in the Society of the Blessed) we shall have a clear, full, and perfect Knowledge.

Noah himself liv'd Four Hundred and Fifty Years after the Flood; and there is no Doubt, saw and knew much of the Affairs of the World: And there is as little Doubt, in my Opinion, that he doth and will communicate the Knowledge thereof among the Blessed: And so will other of the pious Patriarchs, and good Men of that Age. They will all contribute to the Encrease of the Knowledge of those, that in Succession of Times, are admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven.

And forasmuch as the meanest Saints that formerly liv'd on Earth, had a Part to act upon the Stage of this World, and did perform it; perhaps, even each of them, as well as the holy Angels, may contribute something to the mutual Encrease of Knowledge amongst the Blessed. The least of all Saints will be able to say something of the Attributes and Perfections of God. Some of the Effects of his Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, they have observ'd, and will be able to mention to his Praise.

How many of the Days of Eternity may be spent in learning the History of the World, and the Church of God in it, I must not pretend to discourse, much less define. But surely, it being so exceeding large, and the Parts and Instances of it being so numerous, it may justly be thought, that a very considerable Part thereof will be therein employ'd. 'Tis certain, that in Heaven the Blessed will retain their own proper Essences; which being finite, I am not able to conceive, how they can receive the Knowledge of Things any other Way, but successively; and what is receiv'd successively, doth exhaust more or less of Time; according as that Knowledge, or those Notices of Things are more or less numerous and encreas'd.

Q. Mr. Dunton, *What is the Wind, what its several Qualities, and how is it ingender'd? If you'll give me a satisfactory Answer to this Question, I shall as greatly admire your Athenian News as ever I did your Athenian Oracle, this being a Question that was never yet answer'd to Satisfaction.*

A. The Wind is an Evaporation of the Earth, which ascends above the Air, whose Vapour is hot, and and the which pierces the Air by its Subtlety, for as the Wind in its Species is of a subtle Vapour, and that the Nature of subtle Things is to ascend, therefore its Ascents are made by the subtle Vapours of the Earth, from whence it is driven back again about the Earth, by the Coldness of the Middle-most Regions of the Air.

So that the Offspring and Motion of the Wind, proceeds from above, and its Matter from beneath.

At the Beginning the Winds have no great Force, but the farther they blow, the more they encrease in Strength, because of the new Exhalations which are mingled with them: As it happens in Floods, which tho' but little in their Births, yet do augment and continually encrease by the Reception of new additional Waters.

When Two contrary Winds meet, the weakest always yields unto the strongest, and this makes a Whirlwind, which causes the Loss of Ships, when they chance to be under the Power of such a Whirlwind.

The Exhalations of which the Winds are made, do not on the sudden yield to the Clouds which they meet with in the Air; but strive to overcome them, and so to force their Passage for their Ascent; and so it happens, that e'er they blow here beneath, we see the Clouds above move, by the Agitation of the Winds.

And because the Winds are compos'd of different Matters, and Qualities, to those which form the Rain, they cannot last long together, but always struggle and strive until they have overcome each other. And Rain most commonly gets the better, unless the Wind be provided with a great Quantity of Matter and Substance.

Nor can the Wind maintain it self against the Vehemency of extream Heats, nor against the Rigour of extream Cold; because the Vehemency of Heat disperses, and dissipates it, and the Rigour of the Cold congeals and closes it up with the Clouds, and afterwards reduceth it into Rain.

The Divine Providence of God, in the Creation and Disposition of the Winds, is worthy to be admir'd; not because the Ambition of Men have made thereof an Instrument, and Scourge to ruin themselves, by abusing thereof, as most Men do, most imprudently, and vainly: As Xerxes King of Persia did; who tho' he pass'd the Seas to go to Greece, yet could he not vanquish it, tho' he had in a Manner cover'd it with Soldiers.

So Alexander, who having pass'd the Indies, yet wou'd have search'd for something more, even beyond the great Sea, and it griev'd him to hear that he was at the World's End.

But as for the incomprehensible Bounty of God, who hath dispos'd of the Winds into so many Parts, for the Preservation of the Earth and Air in a sweet Temperance, for the bringing in of Rains, and afterwards the driving of them back, both for the nourishing of Fruits, Seeds, and all Fruit-trees, which by the Agitation of the Winds, and other Causes, are ripen'd, giving likewise Nourishment to the Corn, which it ripens, and preserves from drying and withering. Useful likewise to Man, towards the Discovery of Foreign Parts, and re-

mote Countries, unto which unless a Man shou'd travel, he shou'd be far more ignorant than many Brute Beasts, wanting the Experience of divers Things, which conduce towards the bettering of his Understanding, &c.

Q. *What is it the Saints shall know in Heaven?*

A. In general, they shall know every thing that may confirm and encrease their Joy: And if we cou'd tell particularly what they know, *Bonum esset nobis*, &c. It were good for us to be here; and we shou'd enjoy a Heaven as well as they. We may make a general imperfect Judgment of what they know, but to give you a distinct Account of all that comes within the vast Comprehension of their enlightned Thoughts, is a Work as much above a Man, as the Saints are in Glory above us. And they whose Souls have been taken up to the Habitations of the Blessed, with Purposes that they might return again, have lost those Visions by the Way, as not fit to be brought down to the Notices of Men, being so infinitely beyond the Fathom of their Reason. St. Paul who was wrap'd up to the Regions of Glory, what a broken Account doth he give, of what he there saw and heard? 2 Cor. 12. 2, &c. *I knew a Man in Christ above Fourteen Years ago, (whether in the Body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the Body, I cannot tell: God knoweth) such an one caught up to the Third Heaven. And I knew such a Man, (whether in the Body, or out of the Body, I cannot tell: God knoweth, how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable Words, which it is not lawful or possible for a Man to utter. No Wonder he cou'd not retain the Vision, when he had thus lost himself.*

St. John was (of all the inspir'd Penmen) pick'd out on Purpose to take a View of the *New Jerusalem*, and to give the World a Description of it: Yet how imperfect is his Model? How does his Relation favour of Earth? What gross and elementary Materials hath he chosen to describe it by; as Gold, and Pearl, and precious Stones! Into what a narrow Compass hath he contracted the infinite Dimensions of it? But tho' I can give you but a general and imperfect Account of what the Saints know in Heaven, yet I may be so particular as to say,

The Saints in Heaven shall be in the Light concerning the Judgments and Decrees of God, which are Matters now of such fierce Disputes among us. They shall fully understand the Nature of the eternal Covenant between God and Man, and the Purposes of the Almighty in the Salvation or Condemnation of Sinners. And let the Victory settle on which Side it will, yet all Parties of the Saints shall then concur in one Opinion, and praise and admire the Justice, and Wisdom, and Goodness of God, in the excellent Contrivance and Management of that important Affair; and nothing shall have pass'd between God and us, but we shall be satisfy'd (howsoever we disputed the Matter in this World) that God was in the right; *let him be true, and every Man a Liar.* And I may add, that the Saints in Heaven shall be acquainted with each others Thoughts, the Secrets of all Hearts shall be reveal'd, and every Man shall read his Brother's Soul in Heaven. There shall be no subtle Reservation, no laying of Heads together, no packing of Thoughts, no clubbing and combining amongst a few, to provoke the Jealousy of all the rest; but every Man's Breast shall be clear and open, as free from Reserve, as it is from Design or Guile. Now none but such ingenious Minds as understand the sacred Charms of trusty Friendship,

the Foundation whereof is laid in Virtue and Goodness, are able to conceive, what a wonderful Ravishment and Comfort it is, for Saints thus freely and securely to unbosom themselves to one another, to think in common, to mingle Souls, and to affect and communicate each others Joys. And the fundamental Happiness of the Blessed, the glorious Light thro' which they see and know these and all things else, is the Knowledge of God. We know him by Hear-say, but they by Sight, by near Intimacy and Acquaintance, by perpetual Correspondence and Familiarity; they are ever with him, and he never withdraws himself from their Observation: Neither doth he appear to them veil'd and vizarded in Mystry and Darkness, but his Nature is explain'd to their Understandings: And all those Difficulties that so much puzzle and intricate our Thoughts, are made easy and familiar. The great Problem of the Trinity, the eternal Generation of the Son of God, and the Procession of the holy Spirit, such Paradoxes as Reason can never unriddle, they are abundantly satisfy'd in. Those un-foundable Depths which turn the Brain and make some Atheists and others mad to look into, they are made infinitely happy and wise in the Discovery of. They know that which it is a Sin for us to look into, and wou'd be our Ruin to discover: For can a Man see God and live? No, we must die before we can see him as they do, and as he is. And certainly this must needs be a Prospect infinitely transporting!

Q. *How various will be the Capacities of the Blessed in Heaven?*

A. How various the Limitations of the Essences and Capacities of the Blessed will be, I will not affirm: Peradventure, they may be as various and different as their Rewards will be. Those that have loved and serv'd God in this World, with the greatest Sincerity, and Vigour of Affection and Endeavour, will have the largest Capacities in the other: They will be capable of knowing most of God, and consequently, of loving him most, and being most beloved of him. It seems to me (I say) probable, that the remunerating Grace of God will diversify Men's Capacities in the Kingdom of Heaven, according to their Works here on Earth. I shall readily grant, that no Eye hath seen, nor Ear heard, nor hath the Heart of any Man conceived, what, and how various, how great and stupendious those Objects will be, that the future State will present unto our Thoughts and Contemplations. Who can tell what Variety of Wonders the House of the living God may set before us? Who can imagine the Lustre and Glory of the Heavenly Jerusalem, and what are the Beings that do embellish and adorn the Palace of the great King? Who can tell, or who can conceive, what Species or Kinds of Beings may be comprehended in the whole Universe; and of what various and amazing Natures, Qualifications, and Perfections?

And as we cannot understand what will be the Number, Kinds, Nature, nor Perfections of these Things; so we cannot tell what will be the Joy, Pleasure, Satisfaction, yea, Extasies and Ravishments, that we shall conceive, and have Experience of in the Contemplation and Knowledge of them. Who can imagine what Joy he shall feel, at the Sight, and first Aspect of the magnificent Structure of the Heavenly Palace? At the Vision of those holy Myriads, that encompass the Throne of

God? At the Vision of the holy Jesus, that Prince of the Kings of the Earth? At the Sight of all the holy Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles? At the View of all the holy Confessors and Martyrs, together with all the holy and good Men of all Generations? Who can imagine, what Pleasure and Joy every Object that is offer'd to our Meditation, may raise and awaken in our Souls? Who can think, what Joy we shall conceive from our Exercise of Love to God, and from the Sense and Apprehension of our being beloved of him, and of the eternal Duration of it?

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